

CONVENTION APPEARANCES

Renegade artists will be appearing at the following conventions this summer:

CHICAGO COMICON - JULY 3-5

STEVEN SEAGLE	(KAFKA)
MAX COLLINS	(MS TREE)
TERRY BEATTY	(MS TREE)
DAVID DARRIGO	(WORDSMITH)
JEAN-MARC & RANDY LOFFICIER	(FRENCH ICE)
LARRY HANCOCK	(SILENT INVASION)
WENDI LEE	(PRESS LIAISON)
DENI	(PUBLISHER)

ATLANTA CONVENTION - JULY 31 - AUG. 2

BOB BURDEN	(FLAMING CARROT)
JEAN-MARC & RANDY LOFFICIER	(FRENCH ICE)

SAN ANTONIO, TX - SEPT. 19 & 20

SCOTT SHAW & DON DOUGHERTY	(AMUSING STORIES)
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SAN DIEGO COMICOM - AUG. 6 - 9

STEVE SEAGLE	(KAFKA)
JEAN-MARC & RANDY LOFFICIER	(FRENCH ICE)
MAX COLLINS	(MS TREE)
TERRY BEATTY	(MS TREE)
SCOTT SHAW	(AMUSING STORIES)
DON DOUGHERTY	(AMUSING STORIES)
JIM BRICKER	(OPEN SEASON)
BILL DINARDO	(FRIENDS)
TRINA ROBBINS	(WIMMEN'S COMICS)
MICHAEL CHERKAS	(SILENT INVASION)
LARRY HANCOCK	(SILENT INVASION)
WENDI LEE	(PRESS LIAISON)
DENI	(PUBLISHER)

An Open Letter Regarding Late Shipments

There has been a lot of talk recently about late shipments of some titles. Here at Renegade, we too have had our fair share of titles shipping later than announced. As you are probably aware, Renegade is a bit different from the other comic publishers. Because we specialize in black-and-white comics (and esoteric black-and-whites at that) we have really felt the recent implosion in the black-and-white market. Unfortunately, because of our unique profit-sharing system, our artists have been hurt by this. When their income is severely cut, they have to turn to other ways of supporting their incomes. In doing this they get behind schedule. However, due to the personal nature of most of our artists' creations, we cannot simply throw in a "filler issue" while they get back on schedule. All we ask is for your patience and support. If you like their work and want to see it continue, we need your support when things get tough. We all have every intention of staying in the game. But sometimes when an artist is spending 10-15 hours a day, 6-7 days a week trying to make a deadline on a book you've decided not to buy because he missed his last deadline, well it's not easy to keep trying.

For those who have stayed with us, our heartfelt thanks!



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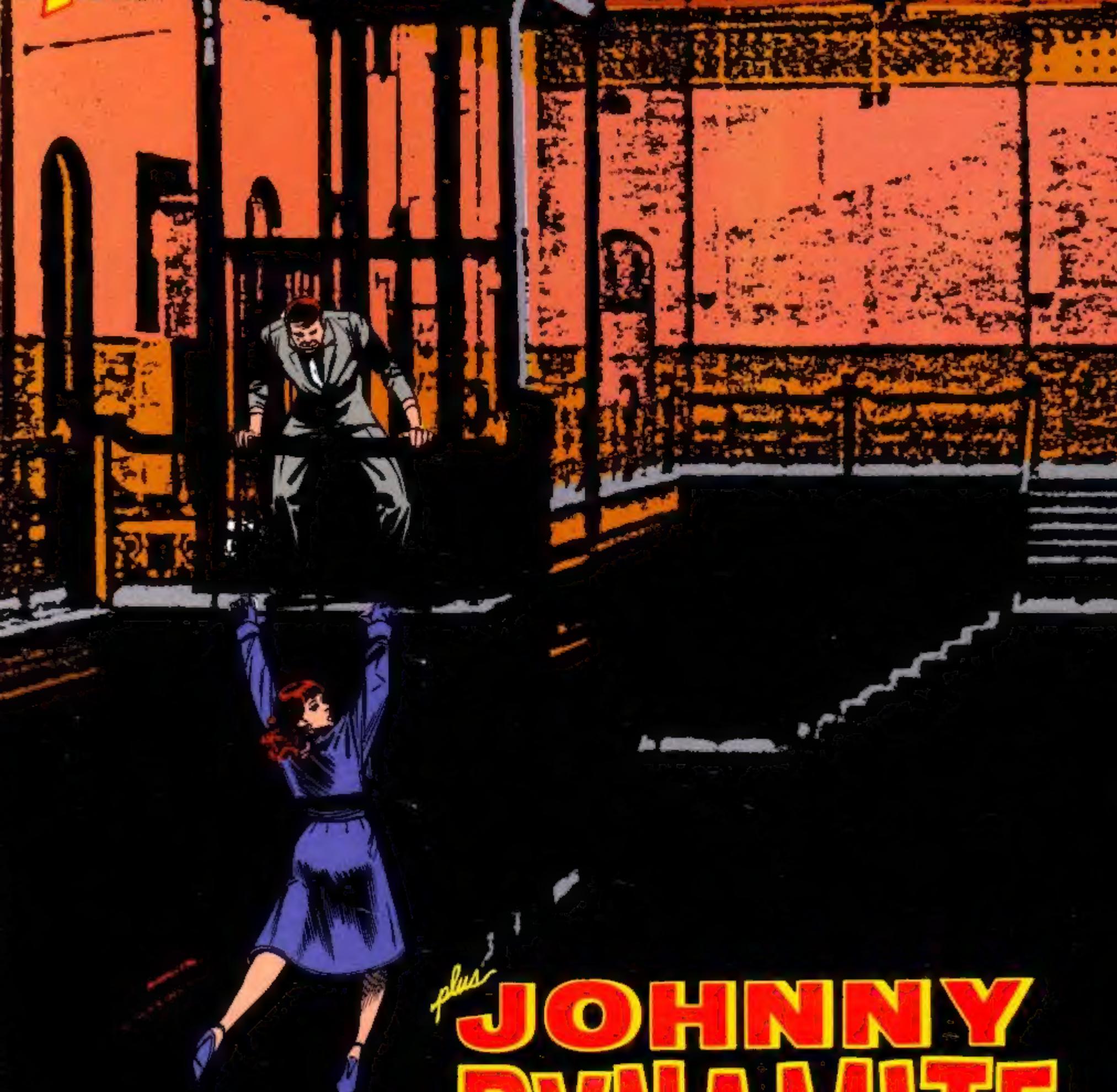
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MAX FOLIANS and
TERRY BRAFFET'S

MS. REEF

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200
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CANADA



plus
**JOHNNY
DYNAMITE**

Ms. TREE

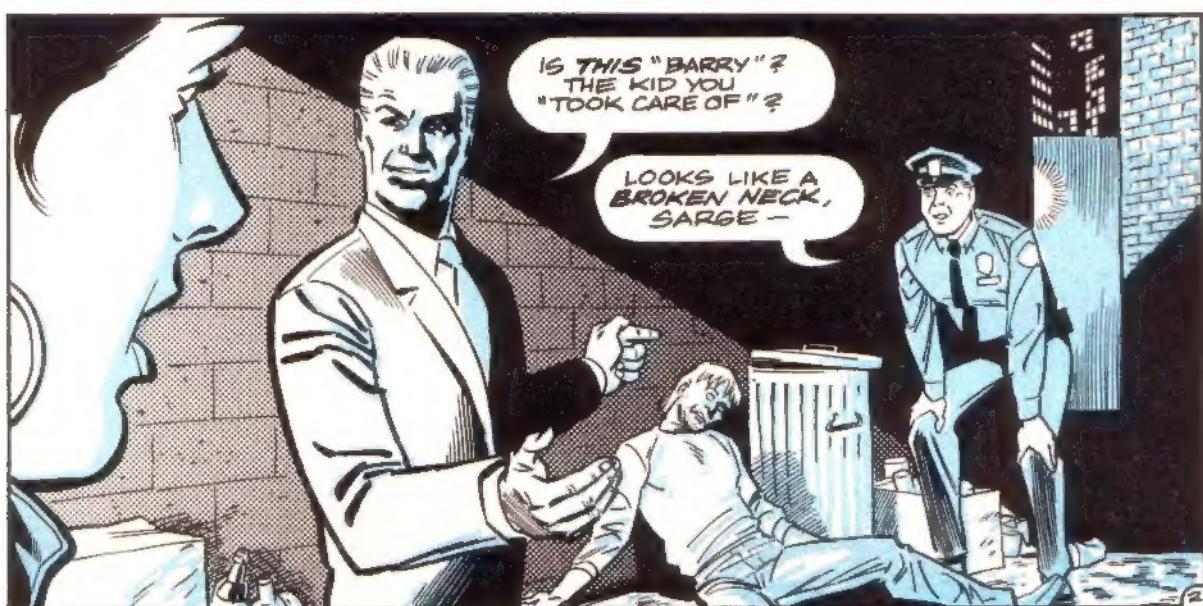
"LIKE FATHER" Chapter Four



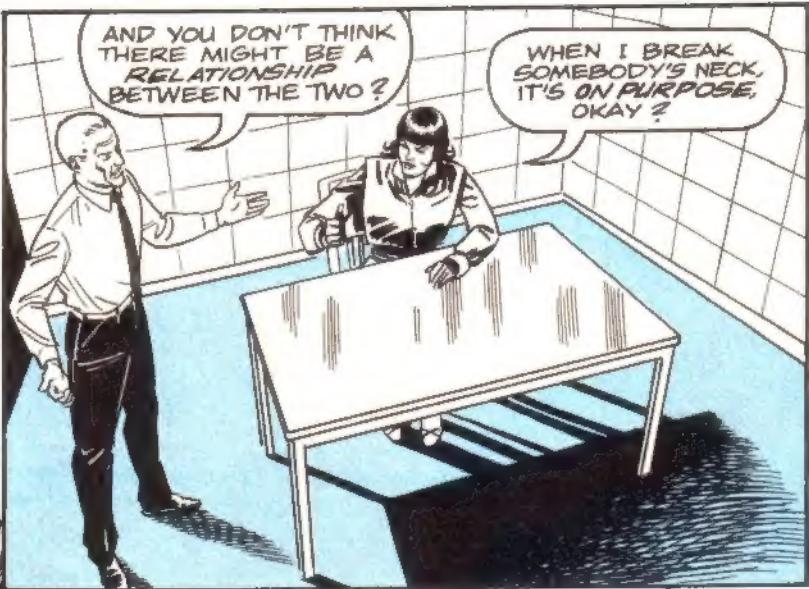
BY MAX COLLINS AND TERRY BEATTY WITH GARY KATO



"BUT I DIDN'T, SGT. BREEN — HE HAD THE DROP ON ME BEFORE I BLACKED OUT— AND I DIDN'T EXPECT TO WAKE BACK UP, EITHER—"



LOOK, I DIDN'T BREAK THE LITTLE BASTARD'S NECK — I JUST KICKED HIM IN THE HEAD. IS ALL!



WHEN I BREAK SOMEBODY'S NECK, IT'S ON PURPOSE, OKAY?

THE .357 IS THE GUN USED TO KILL HER FATHER...

HOW ABOUT THE FREERS AND JACOBS SHOOTINGS?

FREERS AND JACOBS?

MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!

Out in the hall, Sergeant...



BOTH FREERS AND JACOBS WERE SHOT WITH A REVOLVER, BUT IT WAS A .38 — NOT A .357.

WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO SHAKE HER LOOSE, AREN'T WE?



MIGHT AS WELL, CAPTAIN. AT WORST, IT'S SELF-DEFENSE... KILLED HER FATHER'S KILLER. WHO'S GONNA PROSECUTE THAT?







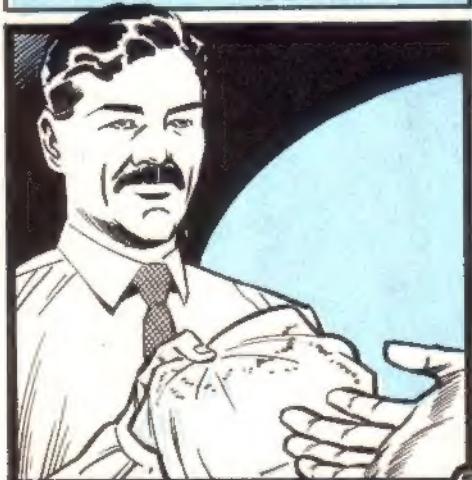
"HE WAS A COP, LIKE YOUR DAD... WELL, NOT LIKE YOUR DAD — JACOBS WAS CROOKED."



"EVERY SIX MONTHS, THE DEPARTMENT BURNS ALL THE CONFISCATED DOPE THAT NO LONGER HAS ANY EVIDENTIAL PURPOSE . . ."



"WE THINK JACOBS HAD BEEN PILFERING THE STUFF — SINCE IT WAS BEING DESTROYED ANYWAY, IT WAS AN IDEAL SET-UP — "



"DO YOU THINK THE FREERS AND JACOBS KILLINGS ARE CONNECTED?"
"DEFINITELY," BREEN SAID. "BALLISTICS SAYS THE SAME GUN WAS USED IN BOTH SHOOTINGS."

THAT'S THE POLICE THEORY? THAT IT'S BEEN DRUGS PILFERED FROM THE DEPARTMENT ITSELF THAT HAS BEEN SUPPLYING MELWOOD AVENUE FOR THE LAST SIX MONTHS?



"HE AND DAD WERE SUPPOSED TO BE CLOSE -"

"WELL, THEY DID HAVE ONE THING IN COMMON -"





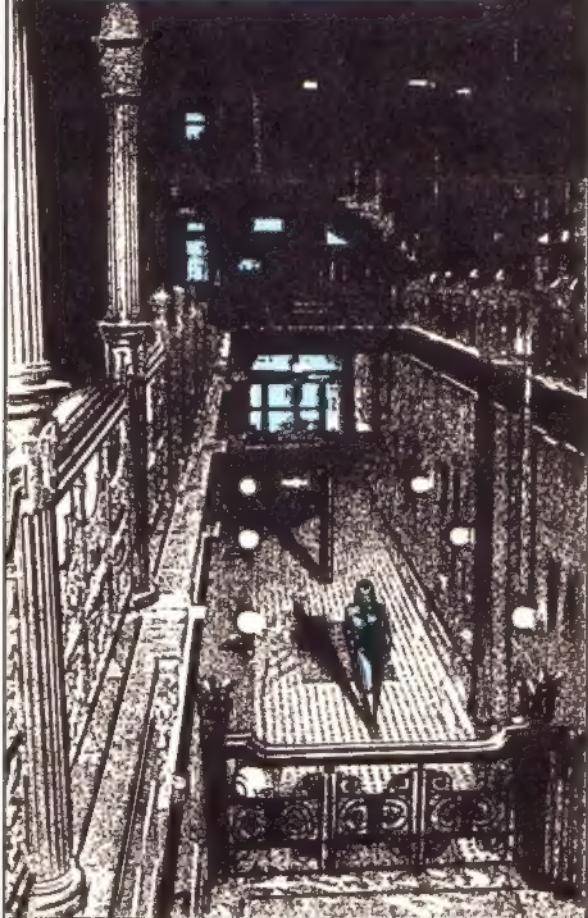
"I DON'T THINK SO. THAT .357 MAG WAS PLANTED
ON HIM, AFTER HE WAS
MURDERED BY SOMEBODY
HE TRUSTED... THE GUN
HE'D POINTED AT ME EARLIER
WAS MY OWN .38, WHICH
GOT LEFT BEHIND AFTER
CRACKEN WAS SHOT WITH IT."



THE BRADBURY BUILDING
HAD BEEN THE HOME OF
PRIVATE EYES SINCE THE
'30S — THEIR GHOSTS
WERE ALL AROUND ME
AS I ENTERED THIS
SHRINE TO A FILM
NOIR PAST —

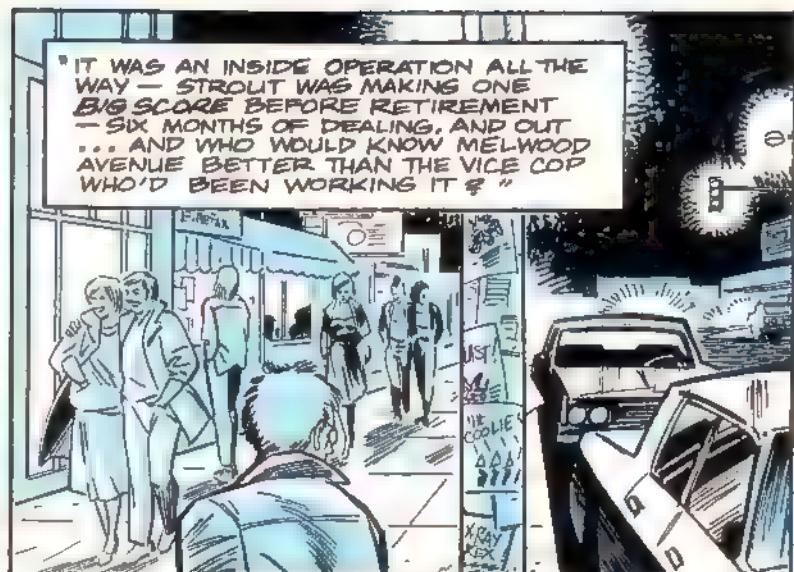
ALMOST DESERTED,
I SHOULD SAY.

THANKS FOR
COMING BY,
MICHAEL —
I WAS
WORKING
LATE.



"THEY'RE ANXIOUS TO SELL
MY FATHER OUT, 'CAUSE
OF SOME PLANTED COKE
— BUT THEY HAVEN'T
LOOKED AT THE MAN HE
WAS INVESTIGATING —"





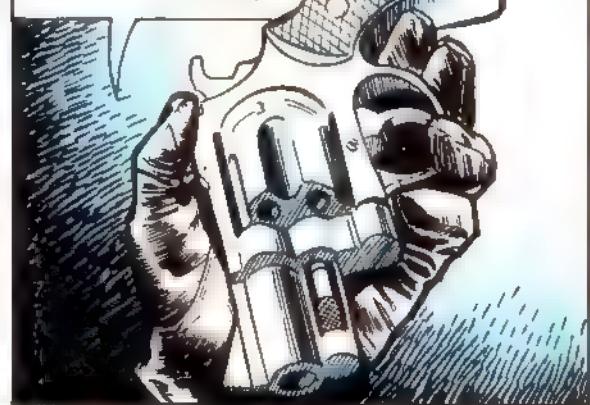
"STROUT WAS IN A POSITION TO RECRUIT OUT-OF-TOWN HELP, TOO — WHEN THE PAIR FROM ATLANTA AND DETROIT TURNED UP ON MELWOOD, HE PUT 'EM TO WORK AND KEPT THEIR LOCAL RECORDS CLEAN —"

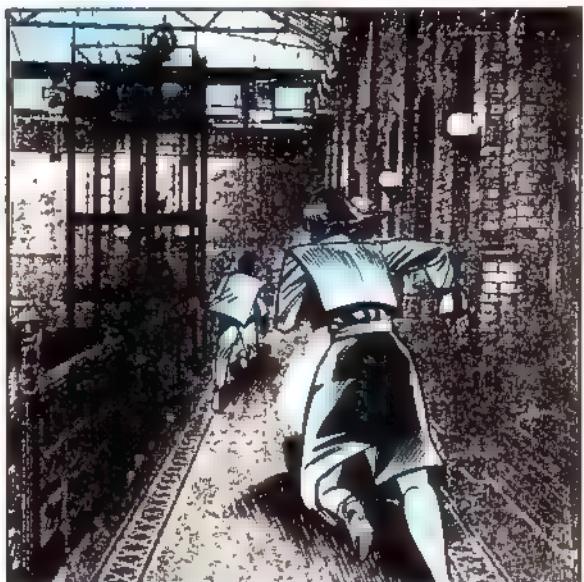


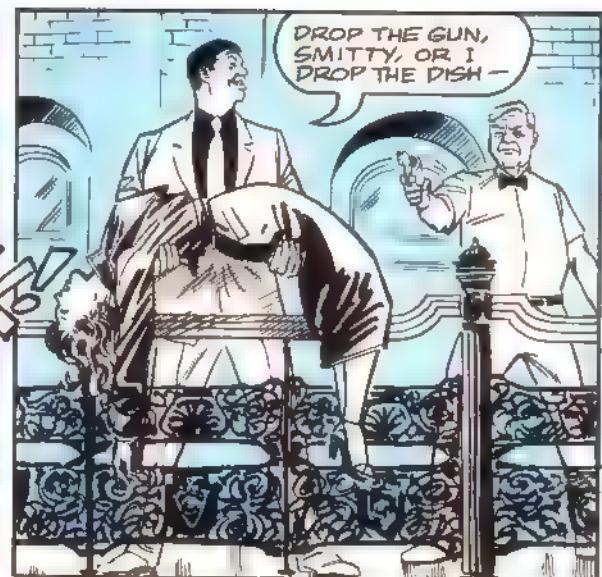
"I HAD IT ALL THE TIME — THE OBJECT OF THE SEARCH — THE EVIDENCE: THE GUN I'VE BEEN CARRYING... WHICH I THOUGHT WAS DAD'S. FOUND IT HIDDEN AWAY IN A SOCK DRAWER — TUCKED IT UNDER A PILLOW..."



THIS ISN'T DAD'S GUN. IT'S DANNY STROUT'S. FUNNY - HE HAD IT IN HIS HANDS TONIGHT AND DIDN'T RECOGNIZE IT, THOUGHT IT WAS MINE. BUT FIVE'LL GET YOU TEN IT KILLED BOTH FREERS AND JACOBS -







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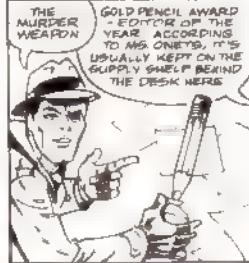
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THE MIKE MIST

MINUTE MYSTERIES
MAX COLLINS & GARY KATO
"FINAL EDIT"



STORY: BARB COLLINS

MESSAGE FROM BARB

Since Max and Terry are out on the summer convention trail, and since it was originally my idea to run a MIKE MIST contest, it's only fitting I should be given this special edition of the SWAK column.

I'd like to thank everyone who submitted an entry to the very first (but not last, I hope) MIKE MIST contest, making it a tremendous success! You never know how these things are going to go between worrying whether or not

anyone would enter or everyone would enter with the correct solution, my lovely long nails turned into little ugly stumps! Anyway, we heard from hundreds of readers, and reading their solutions to the minute mystery, "Final Edit," was a real kick.

And for those of you who miss their Max Collins fix in SWAK this issue, he will be back next, with plenty of "barbs," I'm sure.

The winner of the MIKE MIST contest is Brian Jones of Albuquerque, NM, who will receive the original page of "Final Edit," which appeared in Ms. TREE #38. The winning entry was chosen on a basis of accuracy, originality and earliest postmark. Here is his solution:

"Only one?" said the lieutenant, as he and I left the building. "Who is it, Mike?"

"You tell me, lieutenant," I said with a grin. "Tell me based on the evidence, who our murderer is."

The lieutenant walked on in silent thought, and after a moment, took a deep breath, then looked at me and began cautiously:

"All right. We know the writer — what's-his-name — Maxwell, left the office yesterday afternoon in a huff after being told the comic he was working on didn't have enough action in it. Maxwell told Brass that if he wanted action, he'd give him action, and thus that night, returned after hours and let Brass have it and left, thinking him dead. I'll say that writer gave him action!"

"Excellent," I said, "and how did you arrive at that conclusion if I may ask?"

The lieutenant, more confident, I noted, started again. Brass wasn't quite dead, and in one last dying effort, tried to implicate Maxwell by pointing at Maxwell's name on the manuscript he had on his desk.

Mmm-hmm," I said with a smile.

"What are you smiling at?" the lieutenant inquired. I think he wanted to hit me.

you explain the note with 'BTT' on it?"

"Already one step ahead of you, Mist," the lieutenant said with even greater confidence. "That note was faked by Maxwell. If you would have looked at the body as carefully as I did," he said, and puffed out his chest a little, "you would have noticed that Brass wore his watch on his right hand, which would indicate that Brass was left-handed. Further proof of this can be found in the fact that the phone and the pen set were both on the left side of the desk."

"And therefore..." I said dramatically, urging him on.

"And therefore," the lieutenant said proudly. "Brass couldn't have written that note with the pen in his right hand. Maxwell was trying to frame the artist Terry with that note by making it appear as if Brass had written it. Oh, it was a good plan; after all, Terry had practically threatened Brass a little earlier that afternoon, and it's feasible Maxwell could have heard this. It would have worked, except Maxwell wasn't planning on Brass living long enough to implicate him with that last little trick of pointing at the book. Pretty neat, eh, Mist?"

I didn't say anything. I thought I'd let him sweat a little. The lieutenant looked inquisitively at me. "Well?" he said. "Haven't you anything to say?"

I dropped the butt of the cigarette I had been smoking to the pavement and crushed it under my heel. We had stopped on the corner outside the Namtab restaurant, a favorite place of mine. I calmly lit another cigarette and had smoked it nearly halfway before I spoke again.

"Granted, the note was obviously a fake," I told him. "But wouldn't you think a writer of the caliber of Maxwell would have noticed his editor's left-handedness and placed the note

"You left out something, sir," I said politely. "Tell me how do

accordingly? Whatever he is, Maxwell's no fool. And I'm convinced he would have hung around long enough to be sure his job was finished — he would have never let Brass implicate him in such a way. Besides, why would Maxwell try to frame himself as well?

The lieutenant shrugged. "I don't — wait a minute, what do you mean 'frame himself'?"

The lieutenant's ego was obviously deflated.

"If you really *had* looked closely at the desk," I said, trying not to sound sarcastic, "you would have noticed that the script couldn't have been there at the time of the murder. Someone *put* it there to make us believe just as you did, that Maxwell was the murderer. If you had looked closer, you'd have seen that the bloodstains on the desk are *underneath* the manuscript."

I knew what was coming next: "I don't follow you," the lieutenant said.

"Look," I said, and began to talk faster, the way I usually do when I'm onto something. "If the manuscript *had* been there at the time of the murder, the blood would have been splattered across the cover of the book, and *not* underneath it. Therefore, it was put there by someone who wished to frame Maxwell *after* they had killed Brass. Now, if Maxwell had murdered Brass, he surely wouldn't have tried to frame both Terry and *himself*, especially in such a clumsy manner. No. I think Maxwell is in the clear. Somebody's trying to frame him."

The lieutenant opened his mouth to speak. I silenced him with an upraised hand and continued.

"Now, you *could* argue that Terry killed Brass, and was trying to frame Maxwell with the manuscript trick, and then Brass tried to leave us a note before he died. But, we know now that the note was faked. And if Brass didn't write it, the murderer must have. But if Terry murdered Brass, why would he leave a note with his own initials on it then? It's the same story — the murderer trying to frame himself. No again, lieutenant — I think Terry's in the clear, too. That leaves us with one suspect, just as I said before."

"Della Onets!" the lieutenant exclaimed. I nodded, satisfied. "But of course!" he went on. "She and Brass were lovers! Now it all fits!" I noted that now it was the lieutenant who was talking fast. "The two of them probably had a spat last night when she and Brass were — er, working together," I cocked an eyebrow at him, "and she coshed him with that gold pencil."

"Right," I said, "besides, the pencil was on a shelf *behind* the desk, remember. Brass wouldn't let just anyone waltz behind his desk — it had to be someone he knew rather well. I think their relationship had probably been growing cold for several weeks now. He probably tried to let her down easy last night and called her into his office after hours to tell her it was over. He most likely stayed seated while she paced about the room and when he called it quits she grabbed the pencil and let him have it. Then she tried to frame both Maxwell and Terry for the murder, knowing each had argued with him earlier and thus each had a motive."

I paused and studied what was left of my cigarette, then stared up at the restaurant's sign as I spoke.

"Perhaps she thought we might discover *one* clue was a fraud, but surely not *both* of them. I think she figured one of them was going to have to take the blame and that we would either think it was Maxwell trying to frame Terry or vice-versa, and in each case Brass tripped one of them up with his own clue. It was Double Jeopardy."

"Good God!" the lieutenant exclaimed. "And she would have gotten away with it, too, if not for you, Mike!"

I dropped the minuscule cigarette butt into the gutter and motioned toward the door of the Namtab restaurant.

"C'mon in with me, lieutenant. You can call your men from the phone inside. I'll come down to the station to make my statement later. Buy you breakfast, sir?"

The two of us passed through the door. It was going to be one of those days already.

Brian Jones, ALBUQUERQUE NM

Without a doubt, the entry most worthy of the booby prize was submitted by T M Maple, Weston, Ontario, who wrote his entry in a voice other than Mike Mist's. Here it is:

First, I absolutely must thank the wonderful Mr. Maple for giving me this wonderful opportunity! It's so nice to be back in the public spotlight in front of all you wonderful, wonderful people after all these years. Apart from the occasional Laugh-

In rerun these days, I just get so little exposure! Ha, ha, ha!

But on to the mystery. It certainly was absolutely horrible to see that bloody murder scene! Though Mr. Brass was certainly a mean man, he did not deserve such a cruel and brutal fate, to be sure! But he must have been an intelligent man to be in his position of authority, so I looked for any clue he might have left — and there it was, plain as day! One finger of his... corpse pointed to the words "Colin Maxwell" and with the other hand he wrote "BTT", which just *must* stand for "B T. Terry", the artist, don't you think? But wait! (Oooo, this is *so* exciting!) That's *so* obvious, isn't it? These things are usually so much more complicated, aren't they? And besides, how could Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Terry *both* have committed the murder when there was only *one* murder weapon? And besides, those two nice gentlemen were there at *different* times.

No! It *couldn't* have been them! It *must* have been the only other person who had the opportunity. (dramatic pause)

Miss Della Onets!!! She killed him because he was a *nasty* old man! She bashed him over the head with that statue, creating a bloody torrent of... excuse me, I think I'm going to be sick.

Ahem, well there you have it. Horrible, *horrible* events but now we have the answer. Thank you, thank you. A wonderful contest, Mr. Collins! And I hope you will all come to see my wonderful new show featuring traditional Welsh cowboy ballads! I'll be at the Savoy in Duluth next week, and Ed's Hide-Away in Moline after that. Thank you! I love you! And good night, Miss Vicki, wherever you are!

Tiny Tim, SHOWMAN EXTRAORDINAIRE

The most interesting (or most realistic) solution was sent in by the editor who recognized himself in the story. He wrote

Dear Mr. Collins,

I think I figured out the solution to your 'Mike Mist' mystery in the lastest issue of MS TREE. I believe the murderer is

the editor. It is clear to me he committed suicide, having to work with a prima donna writer and a prima donna artist. Happens all the time in this line of work. Honestly, I'm surprised you couldn't come up with anything more original.

Sincerely yours,

Mike Gold SENIOR EDITOR DC NYC, NY

For those of you who thought the mystery too easy, here's one who missed (or did she?)

Dear Max,

Re the whodunit contest.

So you bums want to know who did it, huh? Simple. The writer was out — the angle of the blow clearly indicated a right-hander, and Mr. Maxwell is a southpaw. (How did I know? I looked at the sixth panel, idiot — do you think I'm blind?) It couldn't have been the artist, all artists are wimps and pansies incapable of the manly art of violence. When the police found Terry to check his story he was scribbling nasty caricatures of Brass on the walls of a public toilet. And as for Onets — well my infallible, well-honed, experienced P.I. instinct (as well as the fit of my trousers) told me she couldn't possibly be the murderer. She's going to tell me all about her sordid, desperate world this weekend, at a cosy little nook called Motel 6.

So who did it? Can't you people see what's right before your eyes? Clearly, underneath the Red Dog manuscript was a copy of an editorial by an independent publisher who'd finally decided to wake up, smell the coffee and go for the gold. Just behind the telephone was her business card, one monogrammed shoe had been left under his desk and her personalized nail polish was still embedded in the scratches on his right side of Brass's face. It was obvious. In a clandestine meeting to carve up comics, profits and territory they fought and Deni Loubert had wielded the final 'red pencil' of them all.

Eileen Rob, LOS ANGELES, CA

Finally, we would like to acknowledge five others, John Dinan, Topsfield, MA, Marty Golia, Hartsdale, NY; Paul

Linhardt, Allston, MA, Victor J. Miller Sr., Somerdale, NJ and Mark Sullivan, Bethesda, MD, who will receive copies of THE FILES OF MS. TREE, VOLUME III for also solving the mystery correctly. To that end, the rest of the column will be devoted to comments which were attached to contest entries sent in by people who were not inclined to write us before.

Dear Mr. Collins

I'm kind of sorry that we're only getting 12 pages of Ms. TREE but better 12 than none, I reckon. At least they're *quality* pages. As reprints go, JOHNNY DYNAMITE seems an apt choice. I'm not *tremendously* impressed with it, but, what the hell, I trust your judgment. I'll give it a chance. In any case Ms. TREE is still swell! Stay well. Be profitable.

William L. Dewhurst, RIDGEFIELD PARK, NJ

Dear Mr. Collins

Forgive the brevity of this response but finals are upon us poor unfortunate students now. Let me merely give a quick synopsis of my feelings towards your work as a whole since I have not been motivated to write before. I've thoroughly enjoyed the Ms. TREE stories since the beginning (I began reading at A-V #1 and bought back through the color issues). I prefer the duotone format, it gives a unique feel to a unique book. I grimaced at the back up replacing a second chapter in the issue, but, the last was the best of the three of the group, so I won't give up on it yet. Best wishes for continued success.

Brian Lieske, AUSTIN, TX

Dear Max,

Your tribute to "Dragnet" is finer than the smoke particles from a Fatima cigarette. Since the copyright laws do prevent you from showing certain faces (such as Jack Webb's) and using the full names of the Dragnet characters (it seems to be a bit of a cheat to have "F. Smith" on a door instead of "Frank Smith"), but the law is the law (if not an ass). All in all though, everything about this Ms. TREE serial is wonderful.

Well, everything except the colouring. On some pages the colors were too light and thin, then on other pages too dark and thick.

With this issue's Johnny Dynamite reprint, I now begin to see what you and the other Dynamite fans have seen. A tough private eye who doesn't mind messing it up with the bad guys, although it does get a bit wordy in spots.

Regarding your interview in the latest issue of AMAZING HEROES while I still feel that a new origin for Jason (Robin) Todd is unneeded, I might not have been as hostile to the idea if it (1) carried your opening about a "Dark Knight" and a "Jester", and (2) if the series had been labeled as "Robin: Year One" (or "Robin II: Year One"). While I'm glad you will still be able to write a Batman story in the future, and do agree with the musical chairs on Batman being on the disorienting side, I don't feel that you wrote your best for Batman.

Considering the great whodunits and mysteries which have been done with Ms. TREE and DICK TRACY I was expecting something to show why Batman has been labeled "The World's Greatest Detective". Some of the best stories in the 50's had very little to do with costumed villains, but Batman using his wits to solve a baffling crime.

As for the low readership on Ms. TREE, I feel the same thing towards that, as for the low readerships on the Spirit and Steve Canyon. All three deserve better, and it's hard to believe that just a few thousand comic fans are willing to try something which doesn't need a variation of science-fantasy and/or a skin-tight body costume in order to exist. As an individual I plan to keep ordering all three through my comics shop to keep them interested in stocking those three.

Perhaps the answer to expand the circulation, is (dare I say it) another team-up series. Only with a character from either Marvel or DC instead from an independent comic company. As much as a team-up with Jon Sable or another adventure with Mike Mauser would make sense (and possibly cause less hassle), it might take a Ms. Tree/Batman or a Ms. Tree/Daredevil to bring better exposure to her. (Of course that always leaves open the possibility of a Ms. Tree/X-Factor team-up instead of Ms. Tree/Question).

Until Ms. TREE team-ups with the Comedian or Archie

Andrews, I remain sincerely yours,

Hurricane Heenan, VAN NUYS, CA

Dear Swak

Did Smitty get the Axminster from the same Axminster who ran a PI shop in the 30's (City of Angles TV show) and how much is he paying Ray Bradbury for rent?

Your comics are your comics, you put in them what you want - don't worry about a few who don't like it - can't please everyone

Ron Houdyshell, EAST PEORIA, IL

Max talking now Ron - you're very right about Axminster, but there is indeed a real (and very famous) Bradbury Building in L.A., and it's been used as the moody setting in countless films noir.

Dear Sirs,

I find Ms. TREE to be very interesting and intriguing. MIKE MIST is one of my favorites. While I enjoy the newly begun JOHNNY DYNAMITE series, I wish that instead of sharing space in Ms. TREE that he have his own book. Twelve pages of Ms. TREE is not enough! Thanks for putting out such a great book.

Kevin Youmans, TENNILLE, GA

Dear Sirs,

Thanks for a wonderful book. When I read about the contest I thought this would be a great chance to write to such a great writer and artist as Max Collins and Terry Beatty. Thanks again for the enjoyment.

Steve Wood, LOUISVILLE, KY

Dear Max, Barb, Terry and Gary,

I really admire your work. I am however, a bit upset that you're leaving Batman - you had a good thing going over there. Your Batman was one of the best. (You really mean to say you're displeased with the Cockrum/DeCarlo team?) Regardless, I'm sorry to see you go. How about a guest shot every once in a while, okay? Please? Incidentally, I agree with Dick Sprang's letter about Terry's art.

Keep up the good work

Brian Jones, ALBUQUERQUE NM

Max again, Brian - I may indeed return for a graphic novel or limited series on BATMAN, but my schedule doesn't permit being the regular writer. Stay tuned - same Bat channel, same.

Dear Max, Terry, et al

This is a letter with several purposes. To begin with, it is my first letter to a comic book in several years, my last letter being a significantly "edited" letter appearing in a now-defunct Marvel comic - but I digress. I have been following Ms. TREE from the beginning and I still enjoy the book as much now as I did when it was Ms. TREE'S THRILLING DETECTIVE ADVENTURES, a title that probably ought to be revived now that JOHNNY DYNAMITE has taken up residence - but again, I digress. I like the book. The coloring, no matter what color, always seems appropriate, the art is as stark and melodramatic as the stories, and the writing is so consistently good that I have begun to follow the name of Max Allan Collins the way that I follow the name of Alan Moore. Kudos to you all!

My second purpose is to lend my voice to the JOHNNY DYNAMITE controversy. To be frank, I neither like nor dislike JOHNNY DYNAMITE, thus I wouldn't miss it if it were gone. I begrudgingly give up any space that might feature Michael Tree.

My third, and most important purpose, is to help Mike Mist solve the murder of Mark Brass. (Here letter edited. Sorry, Mark! Barb.)

Mark J. Renaud, BERNARDSTON, MA

Dear Max and Terry

Thanks for a thought-provoking and enjoyable comic. It's one of our favorites

Scott Davis and Dan Donovan, HANSON MA

Dear Max, Terry and Barb,

I wanted to tell you that I miss the reduction of Ms. TREE story pages but it's better than no Ms. TREE at all

Dave Schollaert MASSILLON OH

Dear Max

Last week I picked up a copy of AMAZING HEROES #119. Usually I never purchase fanzines of any sort. I spend about \$40 per month on comics, and fanzines are just not in the budget. Possibly it was the picture of Wild Dog on the cover that made me pick it up, but it was the articles about Superman inside that made me take it home. I've been a Superman fan since 1956.

The interview with you was about the fourth article I read in the magazine. Sorry. But, as I said, I'm a Superman fan. Anyway I'd known you had been doing Batman for DC (my second favorite hero) and I was sorry to hear you'd resigned from the job. You never really had a chance to develop a style with your rendition of the Dark Knight as he's come to be known. I agree with you that Dick Sprang was the definitive Batman Artist. Back then Batman smiled more, was warmer and seemed more likable. Now, he's a grim, driven, almost obsessed, vigilante of the night and they've played around so much with his history any older fan, such as myself, is thoroughly disgusted. It's hard to dump all that continuity, but if they were smart they'd dump the last 5 or 6 years, and start again. Which we know they can't. They could chalk it all up to a nightmare on Bruce Wayne's part, and go on from there.

I've also been a great fan of Dick Tracy, and have been reading him for the past 25 years or so. Chester Gould did a marvelous job, and you took over the reins without skipping a beat.

To show you how ignorant some of us readers can be, it never dawned on me that the Max Collins doing Dick Tracy was also doing the Batman. My only defense in this case is upbringing. When I first started reading comics, and for several years after, credits were never printed on splash pages or anywhere else. When they did start printing credits, I never realized they were there. All I was interested in was a good story. And they usually always were.

The interview went into great depth on the subject of Ms. TREE, and on the strength of that, I went out and purchased issues #37 and 38. I'd never read Ms. TREE before. In fact until

the new comics shop moved into town a few months ago, with its vast array of titles, I never knew Ms. TREE existed. I went into it with an open mind. Trying not to pre-judge. And I will tell you now, I think you've got a convert.

The more I read the more she reminded me of a detective who became a favorite of mine, Mike Hammer. She's got the same hardboiled attitude and dislike of being pushed around.

It's not unreal to see this scenario repeated in the pages of Ms. TREE. It's a premise that works in this day, and age. It's just unusual to see it in a female character. That's probably why she's a hit with most of her readers. If more people weren't ignorant of her existence, as I was, I'm sure your readership would be greater.

I won't go into the psychoanalytical side of her, as some readers are wont to do, for how can you analyze a fictitious person? She can be whatever you want her to be. You either like the stories or you don't. I, for one, do.

Anyway, because of the positive reaction I had to issues #37 and 38, I went back to my comics dealer, and began to go over his collection of back issues. Low and behold, he had several of Ms. TREE. I immediately snatched up issues 1 thru 6, of which I bought 2 of issue #1. Gradually I'll find all the back issues, and will have the complete history of Ms. TREE.

Victor J. Miller Sr., SOMERDALE, NJ

Dear Max, et al

I really enjoy Ms. TREE and would like to recommend PRIVATE EYES ONE HUNDRED AND ONE KNIGHTS by Robert A. Baker and Michael T. Nietzel (Bowling Green University Press) to fans of private eye novels. The book holds enough worthy new mysteries to satisfy even the most voracious hardboiled readers.

Mark W. Sullivan BETHESDA MD

True fact: author scholar Michael Nietzel was born and raised in Muscatine, Iowa, and played trumpet in the same junior high band - indeed sat in a chair adjacent to - Mr. and (future) Mrs. Max Allan Collins.

Dear Max, Terry, Barb and Gary

I picked up the first issue of WILD DOG and liked it very much. I'll try to get an LOC out to DC about it. In the meantime I'd just say that I was intrigued nice characterization on the reporter and I love the dog emblem. Terry's art never looked better - I'm glad to have the chance to see him draw more action that he usually gets to do in Ms. TREE. Keep up the good work.

Marty Golia, HARTSDALE, NY

More Letters After

“Johnny Dynamite”



JOHNNY DYNAMITE in PROMISE TO A CORPSE



IT WAS AFTER SEVEN...
ALREADY DARK... WHEN
I REACHED THE OFFICE
TO TURN IN A REPORT OF
AN INVESTIGATION FOR
ONE OF THE INSURANCE
COMPANIES.

JOHNNY! OH-
JOHNNY!...
THANK GOD.
I MUST
TALK TO YOU.
WHERE CAN
WE GO?

WH--??
GINGER
CURTIS!
WHY, UP
IN MY...

SHE SAID. I'D RATHER
NOT TALK THERE, JOHNNY.
WILL YOU COME TO MY
APARTMENT? PLEASE!"
MY PONTIAC WAS PARKED
DOWN THE BLOCK. WE
MADE IT TO HER PLACE
IN A HALF HOUR.

I WON'T
TAKE UP
TOO MUCH
OF YOUR
TIME,
JOHNNY.

RELAX, HONEY.
I'VE GOT ALL
NIGHT. IT'S
BEEN A
LONG TIME.

MAY MEMORY WAS UN-
EASY. GOING BACK THE
TWELVE YEARS. GINGER
WAS A KID THEN AND
SO WAS I... A COUPLE
OF HOT KIDS WITH OUR
MINDS ON SEX.

THEN THERE CAME A
TIME WHEN I GOT SOAR-
ED. PLENTY SCARED.
AND I THUMBED MY
WAY OUT OF THE SMALL
INDIANA TOWN FOR
GOOD.



SHE WAS SOMETHING TO LOOK AT AS SHE SLIPPED OFF HER COAT. GINGER HAD IMPROVED WITH AGE. I WAS WATCHING HER, WONDERING IF SHE COULD GET THROUGH THE DOOR SIDEWAYS. SHE SAID:

I'LL PUT ON COFFEE, JOHNNY. THERE'S THE STUFF IN THE REFRIGERATOR. I'LL DRESS IF YOU DON'T MIND. I'M DUE AT THE THIRTEEN CLUB AT NINE.

THAT'S ROCKY STEIN'S JOINT. I CAN'T SAY I LIKE THE COMPANY YOU KEEP.



SHE DIDN'T ANSWER THAT ONE. I HEARD HER PULLING DRESSER DRAWERS AND SPLASHING WATER. I FOUND A COUPLE OF SMALL STEAKS AND FROZEN FRENCH FRIES, AND A BOTTLE OF SCOTCH. THEN I CALLED HER. WE WERE BOTH HUNGRY. WHEN WE WERE FINISHED...

ROCKY AND FRANK NAST, WELL, OWN CLUB THIRTEEN...AND ROCKY IS TERRIBLY JEALOUS OF FRANK!



...JEALOUS OVER ME, JOHNNY. AND I'M SCARED. ROCKY VOWS HE'LL KILL FRANK, AND I WANT YOU TO MAKE SURE HE DOESN'T TONIGHT. YOU SEE, ROCKY GOT WISE LAST NIGHT THAT FRANK AND I WERE WELL, ANYWAY. AFTER TONIGHT WE'LL BE OUT OF ROCKY'S REACH...

TO LUCK HONEY. I OWE YOU SOME THING FOR OLD TIMES.

FOR OLD TIMES! WHY DID YOU RUN OUT ON ME?

WHY I DUNNO. CRAZY.



IT WAS A QUARTER TO TEN WHEN WE REACHED THE THIRTEEN CLUB. I KISSED GINGER AND LET HER OUT.

I'LL GET TO WORK, BABY!

GOODBYE, JOHNNY DARLING! YOU'RE SWEET!



GINGER SAID FRANK LIVED ON LAKE DRIVE AND WAS WAITING FOR ME, SO I DROVE IN THAT DIRECTION. THE BLAST I HEARD COULD HAVE BEEN THE BACKFIRE OF A CAR, BUT IT WASN'T. AND SOMEHOW I KNEW IT WASN'T. IT SOUNDED LESS THAN A BLOCK AWAY.

I TURNED THE NEXT CORNER AND MY LIGHTS PICKED OUT THE STIFF RIGHT AWAY.



I GUESS I KNEW EVEN BEFORE LOOKING WHAT I WAS GOING TO FIND.

FRANK NAST.. WITH A SLUG IN HIS HEAD FIRED SO CLOSE IT COULD HAVE BEEN DONE BY HIS BEST FRIEND!



I MADE A FAST EXIT FROM THE SPOT AND PARKED A COUPLE OF BLOCKS FROM THE CLUB. I DIDN'T LIKE WHAT I WAS GOING TO HAVE TO TELL GINGER. I HAD NO REGARD FOR NAST HIMSELF. HE WAS A THUG AT HEART, WITH A RECORD A MILE LONG, WHO HAD MUSCLED HIMSELF INTO ROCKY'S BUSINESS. SUDDENLY...

I KNOW THAT CAR!



YEAH... IT'S ROCKY STEIN. ALL RIGHT!



THE THIRTEEN CLUB WAS A FRONT... A WELL-PAYING EXPENSIVE FRONT... FOR AN EVEN MORE EXPENSIVE GAMBLING JOINT IN THE BACK ROOMS. ROCKY SAW ME. DIDN'T LOOK PLEASED...

OUT OF PLACE HERE, AINT YOU SHAMUS?



YEAH. I HAVE NO ROLL AND NO RECORD. I'M LOOKING FOR GINGER CURTIS.

"WERE OLD FRIENDS FROM THE SAME HOME TOWN," I SAID. THE LEER ON ROCKY'S FACE CHANGED TO A SNARL. BUT HE WENT TO A TABLE IN A CORNER. GINGER WAS WITH DON HOLLAND, WHO WAS FRANK NAST'S BOY. PROBABLY THERE TO CHECK THE HOUSE.



THERE WAS AN ANXIOUS LOOK IN GINGER'S FACE AS SHE CAME UP FRONT. WHEN SHE SAW ME SHE BROKE INTO A SMILE SHE DIDN'T MEAN...

WHERE CAN WE TALK?

THERE'S A BOOTH UPSTAIRS. ACT AS IF YOU WERE GLAD TO SEE ME! AS IF YOU HADN'T SEEN ME IN A LONG TIME!



UPSTAIRS WAS A BALCONY WITH CURTAINED BOOTHS. IT WAS STILL EARLY AND NONE OF THEM WERE OCCUPIED. GINGER SLIPPED INSIDE ONE AND I FOLLOWED. DREW THE CURTAINS...

WELL, HONEY I HATE TO TELL YOU THIS, BUT I'M OUT OF A JOB. BEFORE I START!

OH MY GOD! YOU MEAN... FRANK?



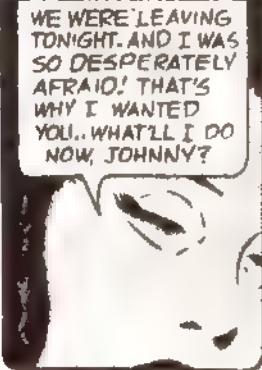
SHE KEPT FUMBLING IN HER BAG AND I HELD OUT MY CHESTIES PACK TO HER...

NO... I HAVE MY OWN... OH....



I GOT TO THE FLOOR BEFORE GINGER DID. AND I SAW THAT SHE HAD TWO AIRLINE TICKETS. I RAISED MY EYEBROWS QUESTIONINGLY... GINGER DROPPED HER VOICE...

WE WERE LEAVING TONIGHT. AND I WAS SO DESPERATELY AFRAID! THAT'S WHY I WANTED YOU... WHAT'LL I DO NOW, JOHNNY?



LOOK, HONEY. WE'RE GOING OUT OF HERE TOGETHER. I'M GOING TO TAKE YOU HOME TO PACK... AND SEND YOU TO THE OLD HOME TOWN. WHEN I HAVE YOU HOME SAFE I'LL PHONE HEADQUARTER'S AND TELL 'EM WHAT I KNOW. LET'S GO!



I GOT NO FARTHER THAN OUTSIDE THE CURTAIN. THEN THE ROOF FELL IN.

OWWWWW! UNNNNNH!

WHAT'LL I DO WITH IM, ROCKY?

HAUL THE #@!! UPSTAIRS!



I WASN'T COMPLETELY OUT IN SPITE OF THE RAP ON THE HEAD, BUT MY BRAINS WERE BE-FUDDLED AND I COULDN'T USE MY LEGS. I KNEW ONLY THAT THE GORILLA WAS HAULING ME UPSTAIRS, AND SHOVING ME INTO A ROOM...

LOUD G!!! PRIVATE EYE!



I LAY THERE... STUNNED. BUT ROCKY'S BOY WASN'T HAPPY YET. HE HAD TO PUT THE MERINGUE ON THE PIE.



I CLUTCHED OUT HELPLESSLY WITH MY HANDS, BUT I WAS SLIPPING, SLIDING... EVERYTHING WAS FOGGING UP...



I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I WAS OUT... NOT TOO LONG... I CAME TO, HEARING A RATTY VOICE...

YOU PIG! YOU LOUSY LITTLE WENCH! YOU STINKING DIRTY DOUBLE-CROSSING #@!@!@!



I OPENED AN EYE SLOWLY CAUTIOUSLY AND FOUND MYSELF LOOKING THROUGH A FLOOR VENTILATING REGISTER INTO THE ROOM BELOW...

TRY TO PUT THE HEAT ON ME, WILL YOU!



ROCKY! DON'T! PLEASE!

FROM THE POSITION I WAS LYING IN, I GOT A SQUINT AT ROCKY'S BOY. WITHOUT HIS KNOWING I HAD COME TO. WHAT I SAW TOLD ME THAT I HAD BETTER GET UP QUICK...



... WHICH IS WHAT I DID!



THEN I WENT TO WORK!



I WAS BOILING WHEN I STRUCK. I WAS SORE AT ROCKY FOR MAULING GINGER, BUT I WAS MOST SORE AT THE GORILLA FOR THE KICK IN THE FACE SO I GAVE IT TO HIM WHERE IT HURT THE WORST!



THEN AS HE FELL I KICKED HIM AGAIN. THIS TIME FLUSH ON THE JAW, I HEARD HIS TEETH CRUNCH UNDER THE IMPACT. HE WASN'T GOING TO GET UP FOR A LONG LONG TIME!



IT WAS A PUBLIC BUILDING AND I FIGURED THERE OUGHT TO BE A WAY OUT IN CASE OF FIRE. I FOUND THE WAY, AT ONE OF THE WINDOWS. IT WAS OVER A BACK ALLEY....



I WENT DOWN A FLIGHT AND GOT UP ON THE SILL. I COULD HEAR ROCKY'S VOICE DROWNING ON AND I COULD HEAR GINGER CRYING...



WHAAA... SHAMUS!

UP ROCKY, UP HIGH! GET OUT, GINGER! GET OUT BEFORE THE MASSACRE!



WHEN YOU GET CLEAR OF HERE, CALL THE COPS! HUSTLE IT!



I THOUGHT GINGER WAS IN THE CLEAR, BUT AS SHE REACHED THE DOOR...

WHAT IS IT, BOSS?

OHHHHH!



MOVE KID! COME IN, YOU APES
AND STAND AGAINST THE WALL!

I WATCHED GINGER LAM OUT
OF THE DOORWAY...



I WATCHED HER JUST A FIFTH OF A SECOND TOO
LONG, FORGETTING ROCKY...

YOU DIRTY COP!



ONE OF YOU GET GINGER! THE REST
OF YOU HELP ME WITH THE SHAMUS!

COMIN'
IN ROCKY!



I THOUGHT A MACK TRUCK WAS OVER ME.
ROCKY HAD ME BY THE SHORT HAIR.....

PUT A SLUG IN
'IM, ROCKY?

NO, TIE THE *#!@! UP! WE
DON'T WANT A MURDER IN
HERE! WE'LL GIVE 'IM A
RIDE LATER!



I KEPT MY MUSCLES TENSE AND HELD MY
BREATH. THE GORILLAS ALMOST CUT ME IN
TWO WITH THE CORD...

THIS'LL KEEP YA ON ICE
FOR A WHILE, SHAMUS!



ROCKY! I COMBED THE JOINT. I CAN'T FIND THE DAME NOWHERE!

NICE! VERY VERY NICE!

LISTEN, YA BUMS! YA KNOW WHERE GINGER'S GONNA GO? TO THE COPS AND SIC 'EM ON ME! WE'RE GONNA YANK THIS TOWN APART TILL WE FIND HER. THREE OF YOU GO TO HER HOUSE. THE REST COME WITH ME.

ROCKY THOUGHT HE HAD ME SEwed UP TIGHT, BUT IT WASN'T MUCH OF A JOB TO GET OUT. I RELAXED MY MUSCLES AND LET MY BREATH OUT ALL THE WAY. THEN I WORKED THE ROPES A LITTLE AT A TIME.



THE DOOR WASN'T LOCKED. I WALKED OUT. IT WAS A NICE STRONG DOOR THAT HADN'T LET SOUND OUT. I SAW THE BALCONY WAS FILLING UP, AND A WAITER'S BALD HEAD BOBBING UP THE STAIRS...

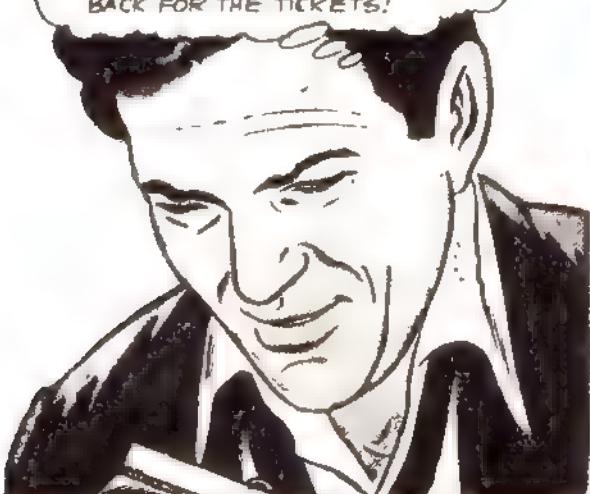


I MADE A QUIET DIVE FOR A BOOTH TO DUCK OUT OF SIGHT UNTIL THE WAITER PASSED. IT WAS THE SAME BOOTH WE'D BEEN IN BEFORE...

GINGER'S BAG! MUST HAVE DROPPED IT WHEN THEY NABBED US!



THE PLANE TICKETS ARE GONE! SHE TOOK 'EM! THAT'S WHY ROCKY'S GOON COULDN'T FIND HER. SHE DOUBLED BACK FOR THE TICKETS!



I GOT MYSELF LOST IN THE CROWD AND EASED OUT WITHOUT GETTING MY COAT. WHEN I FOUND MY PONTIAC I MADE A FAST EXIT OUT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD. WHEN I FIGURED IT WAS A SAFE BET I STOPPED AT AN ALL-NIGHT DRUG STORE.



HELLO HENNESSY YOU HOMICIDE BOYS
PROBABLY FOUND FRANK NAST BY NOW.
WUH HE DID A DAME PHONE YOU ABOUT
IT? NO, WELL, LOOK HENNESSY.
I GOT SOMETHING FOR YOU... BUT I'LL
CALL YOU BACK LATER!



I HUNG UP THE PHONE AND WALKED OUT OF
THE DRUG STORE...

IF GINGER WENT HOME TO PACK SHE'S
A DEAD PIGEON NOW. BUT I DON'T
THINK SHE'D WASTE THE TIME. SHE'D
GO STRAIGHT FOR THE MIDNIGHT
FLIGHT! IF I HURRY I CAN SEE HER
OFF. THEN I'LL KNOW FOR SURE
IF SHE MADE IT!



I HAD AN EXTRA GUN AND SLUGS IN THE GLOVE
COMPARTMENT OF MY CAR. I SLIPPED 'EM INTO
MY POCKET AS I OPENED UP THE LOAD. IT WAS
TEN TO TWELVE BY THE 'BIG CLOCK...



I FIGURED SHE'D BE EITHER INSIDE THE SHIP
OR ON THE WAY TO IT. BUT WHAT I DIDN'T FIGURE...

GINGER CURTIS AND
...DAN HOLLAND!



HE TURNED AND SAW ME AND HIS HAND WENT TO
HIS POCKET I WAS FASTER. NOT MUCH FASTER,
BUT ENOUGH...



URRRRG GRG!

THE LIGHTS WERE GOING OUT FAST FOR DAN
HOLLAND. HE BECKONED TO ME. THERE WAS A
CROWD. BUT THE COPS HADN'T COME...

DON'T TURN GORGEOUS OVER TO THE
COPS, JOHNNY. I'LL SIGN A CONFESSION
THAT I KILLED NAST BECAUSE I
HATED HIS GUTS... SURE... IT REALLY
WAS A FRAME FOR ROCKY... BUT THAT
WOULD BRING GINGER INTO IT. DEAL?

IF AM
DON.
A
DEAL.



WHAT COULD I DO? HOLLAND WAS THE KILLER. I KNEW THAT NOW. I LOOKED AROUND. GINGER WAS NOWHERE IN SIGHT. THE COPS WERE COMING...



I GOT AWAY AND PUT IN A CALL TO HENNESSY. TOLD HIM WHAT I HAD. THEN I WENT TO MY CAR. THAT'S WHERE I FOUND GINGER....

OH, JOHNNY! I DIDN'T REALIZE IT WAS DON... UNTIL YOU... OH JOHNNY, THAT'S WHY DON ASKED TO USE MY OTHER TICKET...

SHUT UP. I HATE YOUR VERY GUTS!



"BUT I WON'T TURN YOU OVER TO THE COPS," I SAID. SHE PRESSED AGAINST ME. BUT IT TURNED MY STOMACH NOW. I SAID: 'GET OUT. YOU'RE HOME!'

PLEASE, JOHNNY?



DON'T BE MAD, JOHNNY! WON'T YOU COME UP? I'LL BE GOOD TO YOU!

GET OUT, I SAID! GET OUT!



I WATCHED GINGER CROSS THE STREET AND I LAUGHED. THE TWELVE YEARS CAME BACK AND I LAUGHED AGAIN! SHE HAD HAD ME SCARED... AND EVEN THEN SHE HAD BEEN SO WISE... TOO WISE FOR A KID OF EIGHTEEN...



I HAD MADE A PROMISE TO A KILLER WHO WAS DEAD NOW. AND I HAD KEPT IT. I HADN'T TURNED GINGER OVER TO THE POLICE.



BUT THERE WAS NOTHING IN THE AGREEMENT ABOUT LETTING ROCKY HAVE HER!

ROCKY WOULDN'T KILL HER. BUT SHE WOULDN'T BE PRETTY ANY MORE WHEN HE GOT THROUGH. BUT GINGER WAS SMART. SHE'D GET ON HIS GOOD SIDE AGAIN AND SHE'D TAKE HIM FOR ALL HE HAD. I OWED ROCKY SOMETHING, TOO. THAT PAID HIM. I STEPPED ON THE GAS. SUD- DENLY I BEGAN TO FEEL VERY VERY WEARY.

THE END



Address all letters of
comment to

SWAK
P O BOX 1007
MUSCATINE IA
52761

Dear Collins & Beatty

Had you just offered a Johnny Dynamite sampler and then gone back to Ms. TREE full-lengthers, I would be on the hunt for the old Dynamite books.

The "rediscovery" function of your Dynamite reprints compensates quite nicely for the abbreviated Tree presence. The Pete Monse pages hardly bear dismissal as mere back-ups. They compound the sense of history that the magazine has exhibited throughout its run; their talky narrative construction allows for a keen contrast with the terseness of the Tree episodes, and their illustrations convey an expressive tension.

Since my branching into comics last winter with the 4 Winds outfit, I have found the simple pleasure of reading comics as a class to feel increasingly like work. Not so in the case of a relatively few titles Ms. TREE among them. Your new stories still deliver the goods — frequency of publication helps — and the resurrection of Johnny Dynamite makes an apt companion piece.

Here for the long run

Michael H. Price FORT WORTH, TX

Dear Max and Terry,

I realize that the pressures of reality intervened to prevent it, but in retrospect, I think it is too bad that you couldn't have started off with the pre-Code stories in your Johnny Dynamite backup feature. Starting off with the two Code-approved stories, as you did, caused a double shock for many of the readers. First was the natural reluctance to accept any reduction in the stories of their beloved Ms. TREE and secondly was the untypically low quality of the Johnny Dynamite stories. With #39's story in mind, it appears clear that Johnny Dynamite will be a more rewarding and enjoyable feature than it may have at first seemed. This was certainly a more gritty and down-to-earth story than the earlier ones and JD showed signs that he could become an interesting character in his own right.

I am also somewhat puzzled that some readers seem particularly upset that the JD stories are reprints. I could understand it if this was material that many people had read before but none so far have said that it is. And if it is material that is new to you, then the fact that it is reprinted material should not be so important (it is significant, of course, but if it is good material and it is accessible to the mindset of a modern reader then there should be few problems.)

Next, I would like to say a few words about the message from Terry that appeared in #39's lettercol. First, I think we all agree that in an ideal world, we would like to have a monthly Ms. TREE with full-length stories featuring the title character. Second, I think that we all appreciate the fact that Max and Terry must arrange their work so that they can at least earn a living wage (and hopefully, much more than that!) Third, I think that we readers can at least sympathize (if not fully identify with, from our own experience) with the frustration of working very hard on a project that is very dear to you and not achieving the financial success that you need. However, given all of this, I must still say that I thought that Terry's words were too strident, and unfairly so at that.

Right off the bat, I think that saying that certain readers have been "whining" about the format change is not justified. Anything I have seen in the lettercol would not fall into that category, in my opinion. Readers were upset and they were saying so. Maybe some of them could have been more diplomatic in the way they put it or more sympathetic to your problems or more informed of the overall situation, but to call this "whining" bespeaks, I think, of a certain amount of disrespect for and dismissal of your reading audience. And Terry closes with the words: "...unless you're working as hard as I am for as little reward 'shut-up'..." I must also disagree

with the sentiments behind that statement. I know of some people that would say that Terry is not so poorly off after all. At least he is working at something he loves to do (and by his own choice, I might add). Is a person earning somewhat more than Terry but doing a soul-numbing job that they hate really better off? But more importantly, I object to the idea that we have to "earn" our right to be critical. Whatever happened to freedom of speech and intellectual integrity? It makes no sense to me that (carrying Terry's condition to its logical extension) I am 'allowed' to be more critical of a rich author or artist than I am of a somewhat poorer one. I always thought that the idea was to attack the **work**, not the person who did it. The same must apply to praise and consideration. **mustn't** it? Finally, I find in Terry's words evidence of the opinion that all of us well-off drudges out here should support Ms. TREE (or, at least, not speak out against it) simply because of the hard work that you put into it and the less than acceptable financial circumstances involved. But again this cannot be a factor in a consumer's decision to purchase a product, let alone in consideration of artistic merit. If I am going to buy a toaster I should pick the one that gives me the best value for my money — not the one made by the company that needs my money the most or whatever.

I do not mean to seem overly harsh or unsympathetic in my above remarks. And when get right down to it, I guess a purchase decision **can** be influenced by **who** made the product — but this should not be a primary consideration, I feel — barring matters of legal and moral unacceptability of course. And when all is said and done, maybe Terry's words will effectively convey the true situation to the readers. I think that many readers interpreted the format change as either unnecessary or as a move by you to decrease your workload while retaining your income. Once they become convinced that the move was born out of necessity, even desperation, and that even so it does not put you in gravy/land, I think that many will reconsider their actions and impressions.

And, in the final analysis, I think you should remember that we're just readers out here and as such we can easily fail to appreciate the intensity and importance of your artistic experience. By and large, we do not mean to offend, only to try and let you know how your actions are affecting us, as readers. And I certainly hope that none of my remarks here were offensive to you, for such was definitely not my intention. Disagreement, yes — of a sort. But no offence intended.

"T M Maple", WESTON, ONT

Dear Max and Terry,

After reading the letter page of Ms. TREE #39 I'm so angry I'm not even sure where to begin. I have never in all the years I've been reading comics and writing letters (and this includes John Byrne's constant arrogance toward his readers, Diana Shultz's famous hate screed in Johnny Quest, and the hey-day of Marvel's Go-To-Hell attitude toward their most loyal readers) EVER seen anything in print as offensive to readers as Terry Beatty's smug, off-target, smartass boo-hoo statements in "A Message From Terry."

Beatty seems to be under the impression that all Ms. TREE readers are either kids who get an unlimited comic book allowance from Mom and Pop or rich "dabblers" in comic fandom who are somehow denying him a living wage.

Both conceptions are incredibly demeaning to Ms. TREE readers, but then, Beatty's ill-advised remarks were apparently designed to alienate as many readers as possible.

There are many of us who actually have to work hard for a living, but don't wallow in the fact the way Beatty did in his "message." I'm 30 years old and I've worked my tail off for a lot less than \$500 a month (and I didn't have a DC royalties check to fall back on!!!) No one is trying to deny Beatty a living wage but if he feels he can no longer afford to render the art of Ms.

TREE it wouldn't hurt the book a bit if he left it and you hired someone who could "afford" to work for Renegade's wages. I know about three hundred talented amateurs who would jump at the chance to do a regular series. It seems to me it would be a lot more prudent to let Beatty take his spoiled brat attitude somewhere else rather than having the book lose its entire audience, but then, as Beatty so tactlessly pointed out, he really doesn't care what readers think, since he's going to do whatever he wants to anyway. Perhaps the most gauling thing of all was having Beatty "laugh" in the readers face. His early work on Ms. TREE was certainly nothing spectacular. It angers me now when I think of all the times I defended his art to other readers who said they liked the stories in Ms. TREE but thought the art was terrible. "Give the guy a chance," I always told them, "his art is slowly improving." It has really only been last year or so that his art on Ms. TREE has even been servicable. I can see no reason for him to be so terribly arrogant at this stage of his career. He has a long way to go as an artist and is pushing this "artist temperament" routine to its very limits. If Beatty can't stand the heat he should stay the hell out of the kitchen and turn the book over to someone who doesn't find the work to be so financially and spiritually draining.

No where in my letter did I once threaten to stop buying the book but Beatty's rude and insulting comments leave me no other choice. I can't see buying a \$2.00 comic just to feed Beatty's ego trip. There also seems to be a prevailing, nagging feeling among you guys that just because you think Dynamite is cool, tough and funky that all readers should bow down to your superior knowledge of comics and that if we don't hold Dynamite in the same high regard you seem to why then, we must be stupid or something. Hey, I don't care if your personal heroes are Donald Duck, Boss Tweed or Frankie Avalon, you people seem to think that not liking Dynamite is some kind of personal insult. I find that attitude extremely childish. Well, you've managed to sour me, not only on Ms. TREE but on all your work (I'm sure not going to buy *Wild Dog* anymore either now that I'm aware you find your fans to be nothing more than amusing annoyances). So if you want to cut your own throats don't expect your once loyal readers to take all your high-handed nonsense lying down. My girlfriend (you'll find her comments elsewhere in this envelope) was buying Ms. TREE because she enjoyed seeing a strong, female character in her own title, not because she was overwhelmingly impressed by Beatty's art or Max's attitude. When you cut the number of Ms. TREE pages you also cut your number of female readers. Can't you people understand that?

Finally, one last comment

I guess that Beatty thinks drawing a "tough" comic book must make him a tough guy, too. So he wants to throw someone down the stairs, huh? I'll bet it will be interesting to see how often he gets thrown down the stairs during the next few months at comic conventions, because I know several dozen former Ms. TREE fans who will be more than willing to see if Beatty can put up or shut up --- guys not at all amused by his threats at violence directed toward people who have supported his work.

T E Pouncey, WICHKA, KS

This is for Max

Yeah, I'm on my way out the door and I've read Terry's message. I wasn't going to even stop reading your comic until I read this issue. You guys attitude made me so angry for it's lack of insight into the comic reader/buyer. I just gave up.

It all makes me so mad, I even regret reading your novels about Quarry, Max, and telling everyone I could find about how much I admired your work and characters. Makes me wanna throw 'em out, pal.

This is for Terry

As I said to Max, I could have lived with less Ms. TREE and some other crime story filler . . . but the cost is a little prohibitive. AIRBOY manages a bi-weekly comic for 75 cents and in color. I like a comic that remembers I work for a living and I'm not a kid with a granny that has lots of disposable income.

You see, Terry, we all have to work for a living. At least some of us. I'm running a business from my paycheck from an eight-hour job, which doesn't leave ME a whole lot of time or money to THROW AWAY. So we all got financial situations, and we do what we can to alleviate problems. I did what I could to help

you by buying your comic even when it wasn't what I wanted. All those people like T E Pouncey were doing what they could to give you a different course of action and still preserve what they were USED TO. Nobody's gettin' this comic for FREE, baby we hadda work to buy it!

Yeah I know about those OTHER black and white comics I even bought a few. At one time like an obsession. I used to buy some Canadian comics, too. But I don't anymore, because the creative gentleman who did the comic apparently had a nervous break-down in the pages of his own comic. I hated to abandon him, but I realized that he didn't see me buying his comic as a PERSONAL FAVOR TO HIM. Likewise, Terry, this ain't no personal favor to YOU. It was because you were better and more interesting got it? And I believed in you.

Lemme tell you something else, buddy. All of this **WHINING** came from people who gave a damn about your product, just as you apparently no longer give a damn about your readers. So EXCUSE THEM FOR TRYING TO HELP YOU. OKAY? Far be it from them to know what they are talking about they only BUY your book.

We KNOW Renegade is a small company. We're the reason it IS a company, and don't you think this ain't so. Unless you buy ALL OF YOUR COMICS, you still gotta write for the masses that do. And if you believe you don't, then fine. Try to make a living with no readers.

I'm glad DC can afford you, and we can't. Maybe DC will buy your *WILD DOG* and your Ms. TREE. I certainly won't, not anymore. I know you couldn't care less. That's why I'm tellin' you.

Now, I'm shittin' up. And I don't care who you throw down the stairs. Just remember to let go will you? A long fall is pretty painful, I hear.

Naomi J., WICHKA, KS

Dear Messrs. Collins and Beatty

I've read every page of Ms. TREE since the very first issue of *Eclipse Magazine*, and I've been more upset with the book or its creators than I am now, after finishing #38.

First, of course, there's the current format. There's no logical reason for me to be buying Ms. TREE. In fact, logic is 100% on the side of those people who are telling you, 12 pages of Ms. TREE, a \$2 cover price and JOHNNY DYNAMITE, to stuff it. However, since I do like to do at least something to support comics other than the latest customized do-gooder, I've more or less decided to lay out \$2 for Ms. TREE - all twelve pages of it - even though there isn't any logical reason for doing so.

But then when I read SWAK in issue #39, the feelings I had for Ms. TREE started to evaporate in the face of the arrogance of the two of you displayed. You don't seem to realize that the readers of Ms. TREE have nothing to do with your decisions. You two want to keep doing Ms. TREE, fine. But don't yell at me because you can't make a living doing it. Don't blame me if you were stupid enough to start JOHNNY DYNAMITE with the worst tales of the series, thereby making a bad first impression. Don't get upset with readers who are making an intelligent decision about what comics to purchase when faced with more than can be paid for with the funds on hand. Don't make it seem as if you're doing us some big favor by putting out twelve pages of Ms. TREE for \$2, you're not, folks. In point of fact you're doing us a disservice by making us choose between a grossly overpriced comic or the loss of said comic book. I mean, if you really want to beg, run a photo on the cover of Mr. Beatty having to eat cat food because there are people who feel, with sound reasoning, that Ms. TREE isn't worth \$2.

And let me repeat that this is coming from someone who enjoys Ms. TREE but is, simply put, turned off from opening the pages of the book to find two people who can't understand that no one - no one - is making them do the book at gun-point.

And FYI, JOHNNY DYNAMITE isn't that great. There are no clues for a reader to follow, and the plots don't compare to Ms. TREE, in #39. God only knows why Johnny suspects Cora and God only knows why he then suspects Marcella. I mean, read the thing. And again, don't blame me if you paid hard cash for it. Again, the decision was yours.

Guys, I'd prefer to see a Ms. TREE mini-series once a year. I could pay for it without feeling bad, and maybe I wouldn't have to hear you whining (yes, it's not just the readers who are getting into the act. Wake up, smell the coffee).

Joshua Adam Bilmes MIDDLE VILLAGE NY

Joshua, this is Max speaking (Terry's say follows). I understand your frustration, but no one is putting a gun to your head and making you buy the book I'm getting a little weary of readers complaining about the "12 pages" we're giving them for their \$2. Here's what we are giving you for your \$2: a twelve-page chapter of Ms. TREE, a two-page spread of MIKE MIST, a four (or more) page letter column, which I handle the responses to myself, a "classic" JOHNNY DYNAMITE tale. In addition, though no one seems to think this counts, Terry provides some of strongest covers around (he does these unassisted, and also does the color guide), and Terry does our limited color work himself on overlays. To put things in perspective, doing SWAK is a full work day for me,

and Terry spends two days a month just doing the color overlays. We ask neither for sympathy, nor for your two dollars - although we'll take the latter, if you feel the package is worth it. That, kids, is the key word package. The Ms. TREE comic book is a package. It is designed so that it will contain enough elements so that even those readers who don't care for one of the elements will still have enough entertainment value left over to make buying the book worth the expense. And FYI, Joshua JOHNNY DYNAMITE is great! (Actually, isn't it up to each of us to decide that for him or herself? Any pronouncement made by me, or Joshua Bilmes for that matter, really doesn't mean much.)

ANOTHER SMUG, OFF-TARGET, SMART-ASS MESSAGE FROM TERRY

Well, it seems obvious that some of our readers got a little bent out of shape concerning my letter column message in #39. Seriously, folks, it was not my intention to insult anybody. I simply thought the reasons behind our format change needed to be spelled out. Some of our readers obviously did not understand why they were getting less Ms. TREE in their copies of Ms. TREE - and I wanted to make it clear that this was an unfortunate situation brought about by the current screwed-up state of the black and white comics market - not an attempt by a couple of greedy creators to screw you out of more money to wall-paper our offices with.

I know that a lot of you out there are working as hard (or harder, though that's hard to imagine) as I am for the green stuff in your wallet... and that's why I made the point that if you could no longer really afford Ms. TREE in its current format and its current price, then do drop us from your shopping list. No one is forcing you at gunpoint to buy this book (though Ms. TREE herself might consider that a good sales tactic). Comic book collecting is a habit (and one I know a lot about), and sometimes collectors feel they have to continue buying books that they don't really enjoy (as in the case of the Marvel fan who was angry because he had to buy GROO "because it's a Marvel" - never mind that it's just about the best thing they publish) - but I'm here to give permission (not that you need it) to quit reading this book if you don't like it. But don't get too wigged-out over my lack of patience with complaints.

I work very hard on this book (as do all involved) for very little reward (because we love doing it), but am not willing to sit quietly on the receiving end of gripes and ultimatums (as in "Drop JOHNNY DYNAMITE or I'll quit reading your book!") - and why the heck should I? And I do take it personally when someone (in a letter or in person) takes the JOHNNY DYNAMITE feature to task - not because my taste is being challenged (I'm used to that I hated E.T. and loved THE SHINING), but because a fellow cartoonist is being insulted. We are presenting Pete Morisi's work in hopes that it will be appreciated by open-minded comics fans with a sense of history (thank you, Michael Price), not to give fans an open forum in which to slag Mr. Morisi in public. After buying the rights to JOHNNY DYNAMITE from Charlton, preparing the stones for black and white publication, and then dividing the meager profits from each issue among Renegade, Collins, Beatty and Kato - we, I am embarrassed and sorry to admit, don't have enough left over to even pay the man a measly reprint fee. So since Pete isn't even getting dollar-one out of this, I don't think he should have to put up with undeserved insults aimed at his work. If taking this stand makes me a smug, self-righteous, pompous ass, then I'm happy to be one.

And as for the charge that I don't have any respect for, or don't care about our fans that's utter nonsense. In the years that I've been attending comic conventions and

doing signings at comic shops, I've always been very happy to meet the readers of the comics I've drawn - and I am often amazed and humbled by their devotion to my work. It is an astounding feeling to have someone open up a briefcase in front of you only to see that it is filled to the brim with copies of your work, waiting to be autographed. Ask almost anyone who has met me at a con and I think you'll find out that I do honestly appreciate every single person who continues to support my work. I say almost anyone, because there are those who have met me who think I'm an insulting, rude jerk - that's mostly because I don't sit still and take it anymore when the first word out of someone's mouth is a rudely put gripe or insult. If someone is rude to me, I let 'em know that they are being so. Honestly, I can't imagine walking up to any cartoonist and saying some of the thoughtless things that have been said to me, or that I have heard being said to other cartoonists, at comic cons.

(I once was by chance, in the same bookstore with a very popular newspaper strip artist - an artist whose work I personally despise - but I did not walk up to him and tell him that his work sucks. In fact, I said nothing to him at all but went about my business, respecting his right not to be accosted and insulted by a stranger. And I go right on cussing at his comic strip whenever I see it taking up space in a newspaper that could be printing DICK TRACY or CALVIN AND HOBBES instead.)

Still, some of you took offense at my remarks in #39 and were, obviously extremely insulted. Again, let me state that insulting you was not my intention.

My writing style is often jokey - sarcastic - smart-ass. What else exactly do you expect from the co-creator of Ms. TREE? Hell, I used the word "whining" in the intro to #39 message because "whining" is a funnier word than "complaining". My "HEE HEE HAH HAH HOO HOO" and my threat to throw you all down the stairs were not intended to be taken seriously. Hell, I thought we all knew each other well enough that we could joke around a little bit in the middle of my being straight with all of you. Unfortunately, some of you were too thin-skinned and humorless to realize that I was poking you in the ribs, not sticking a shiv in them. Despite the nasty nature of the stories I draw, I am a non-violent person, and would never seriously consider throwing anyone down the stairs for any reason. It was a joke, folks. It was a joke when Max said it. It was a joke when Don Westlake said it. In fact, the only time it wasn't a joke was when Ricahrd Widmark did throw the old Granny down the stairs in KISS OF DEATH (1947)... and even that's up for debate depending on how dark your sense of humor is.

So if by my being honest and straightforward and familiar enough with you to joke around a bit, you have been insulted, I apologize. But for goodness sake, next time around have a sense of humor, will you? Or I may be forced to... THROW YOU DOWN THE STAIRS!

THE 3-D ZONE
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HOLLYWOOD 3-D

The 3-D Zone Number Seven

Remember those movie-style comics of the early 1940s with movie stars on the covers? Get ready!

Ray Zone has brought them back in dimension. The 3-D Zone Number Seven is an amazing tribute to those comics of yore and Hollywood legends with HOLLYWOOD 3-D. It features the great Jeanne Mansfield on the cover in both 3-D and color inside. In a 3-D visit with Jeanne at her home, See her heart-shaped bath tub in 3-D! Those fabulous 3-D photos were shot by the great comic book giant. Stars include 25M, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Jane Russell, MAUREEN O'HARA, YVONNE DECARLO plus Harold Lloyd, Jack Lemmon, Bob Cummings, Danny Thomas and Art Linkletter. See them all in 3-D!

Plus great comic book story of Hollywood by Joe Kubert (from "Love Came Second") is included in this deluxe package. Another feature length comic classic lifted "Jabot's Torment" rounds out this great book. Everybody is going to want this one!

Elmer P. Robinson
22 pages (40 comic strips)
\$2.50 (plus 50 cents postage)

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WORLDSMITH CELEBRATION

This is the tenth issue of the critically acclaimed Renegade title *Worldsmith*. With its eclectic appeal, we at Renegade are determined to bring you a variety that we are known for, and the quality that we strive for. *Worldsmith*, with its quiet appeal, has a special place in many hearts, as witnessed by the fact that when *Worldsmith* gains a fan, that person is a fan for life! A toast to *Worldsmith*. May it continue for a long time.

And now, a word about the *Worldsmith* creators:

DAVID DARRIGO
David Darrigo was born in Toronto, Ontario in the mid 1950s. He has worked for the Dragon Lady comic shop as manager for five years and at present, he works for Dragon Lady Press.

From 1967 to 1970, Darrigo self-published (with a few friends) his own comic book and has written a couple of articles for trade journals.

Darrigo was featured in the November issue of *Writers Digest*, a magazine for writers and *Comics Interview* \$4.00.

Dave Darrigo is currently developing an adventure series for Renegade Press entitled *Tony Bravo*.

RICK G. TAYLOR
Richard G. Taylor was born in Fergus, Ontario in 1950. He was a few days late and claims that he wanted to finish a mural on the wall of his mother's womb.

After this auspicious entrance, he spent his childhood years cutting up his dad's "Daily Telegram" in order to save Leonard Starr's "On Stage", Overgard & Saunders' "Steve Roper", and Stan Drake's "Juliet Jones". Hundreds of childhood hours were spent in front of the telly drawing "Lanny Quest" and "The Man From U.N.C.L.E.". This experience served to hone his drawing speed and visual memory.

Taylor taught elementary school at 19, then retired two years later to pursue a painting career. He attended Humber College and later completed a fine arts degree at York University. He has since returned to teaching art and draws *Worldsmith* at night and on school breaks.

Three years ago, Taylor began translating his classroom experiences into a humorous strip entitled "The Blackboard Jumble", which appears in various teacher publications. He also serves as the staff artist and editorial cartoonist for a local teachers' federation newspaper. In his spare time, he continues to pursue painting landscapes and portraits.

Taylor enjoys a wide range of art from Alex Toth and Al Williamson to David Mazzucchelli to Bill Sienkiewicz.

Taylor and his wife Krista happily reside in Mississauga, living under the domination of their four-pound Yorkshire terrier Benji.



WORLDSMITH #8
Written by David Dahlberg
Art by H.G. Taylor
The Worlsmith's pen has it!
Masters, is determined to go to
Spain to fight in the civil war.
Clay is equally determined to
stop him. But first he must find
him!

**SHADOWS FROM THE
GRAVE #2**

Written by Kevin McConnell
Penciled by David Day
Inked by Dan Day

This is a re-solicitation: From
1849 Baltimore to 1932 Salem.
we bring you two tales of
unyielding evil and unadulterated
terror.

**GENIE DAYS BLACK
ZEPPELIN #5**

This is a re-solicitation. The
contents of this issue are:
"Who Shall Cry for Damocles"
(Third and final part)

Script: Mark Shainblum
Art: Gabriel Marmisse &
"Dark Day"

Story & Art: Gene Day
Penciled by Doug Mench
"Flight!"

Story & Art: Joe Ertelavas &
Gene Day
The cover is by Gene Day



KAFKA #5
Written by Steven Sazama
Art by Stefano Gaudiano

Kafka finds out why he has
been pursued and what has
happened to his wife, Rachel.
Be here for the stunning
news!

KAFKA



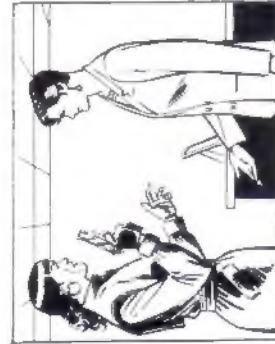
THE SILENT INVASION #9
Written by Larry Hancock
Art by Michael Cherkas

In the conclusion
to "Paradise Lost", Jeffery
Simpson's horrible secret lies
busted on the Tanner farm—and
Matt Smolage is determined to
explore the bitter truth behind the
Sriran Utopian Foundation, despite
the protests of the entire town of
Rockhaven!



12th.

THE 3-D ZONE #7
Spend time with Jayne Mansfield at home, amid all
play. See Jayne's heart-shaped tub-plus photographs of Zsa Zsa
Gabor, Jane Russell, Harold Lloyd, Jack Lemmon and many, many
more—all in 3-D! There will also be two classic Hollywood
stories in 3-D, one by Joe Kubert.

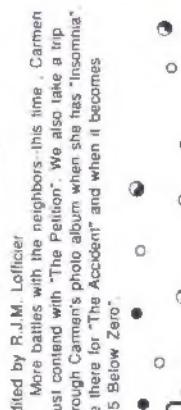


CASES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES #9

Story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
Art by Dan Day
In the peaceful English countryside there stands a house of shame. Can the great Sherlock Holmes save
Miss Violet Hunter from the horror that lurks within?—The Adventure of the Copper Beeches?



MS. TREE #42
By Max Collins, Terry Beatty and Gary Kato
"Coming of Rage" continues as a Romeo and
Juliet love affair heats up into passion and
danger. Will Ms. Tree and arch-enemy Dominique Muera
join forces, or scratch each other's eyes out?
Stay tuned to Ms. Tree for the best in crime
adventure stories with another new Mike Mist
story and a classic Johnny Dynamite tale.



26th.

G.
Edited by R.J.M. Lofficer
More battles with the neighbors—this time, Carmen
must contend with "The Pettitons". We also take a trip
through Carmen's photo album when she has "Insomnia"
Be there for "The Accident" and when it becomes
"15 Below Zero".





Comics Interview

So far, there are only four titles from David Anthony Kraft's publishing company, but I like all of them.

* **MICRA** is an acronym for Mind Controlled Remote Automaton. It is also one heck of a good comic book by Lamar Waldron and Ted Boonthanakit. This is a 12-issue limited series about a crippled woman who can project her consciousness into an automaton (see the title).

That is a much-too-simplified summation of a rich, complex SF novel in comic-book form. Ted's art has been compared to many different American artists (none of whose work Ted has seen; he was born in Thailand and grew up in Africa) and is remarkably clear and exciting.

Grade: A.

MICRA
MIND CONTROLLED REMOTE AUTOMATON™



* *Aristocratic X-terrestrial Time-Traveling Thieves* (X-Thieves for short) has had two first issues, which is annoying to indexers and compilers of price guides, but the bright, sprightly scripts by Henry Vogel and the appropriately humorous art of Mark Propst make up for that. One of the main features of this comic book is that, like the Mod comic books, the panels are filled with gags, such as the crisis hotline which warns: "New universe forming — disaster imminent!"

The Southern Knights make a guest appearance in the second first issue, in which the X-Thieves steal the formula for original Coca-Cola. This is one of the best of the funny comic books (and one of the handful that really is funny).

Grade: A.

X-THIEVES™

* I haven't seen the last couple of issues of *Southern Knights* yet but, unless the series has gone radically downhill since #16, this is still one of the best and most original of all the supergroups. Grade: A.



SOUTHERN KNIGHTS™

* While *Comics Interview* is not a comic book, I think I can squeeze in a recommendation. This excellent publication gives a well-rounded view of the industry, with interviews with writers, pencilers, inkers, letterers, colorists, and others.

Naturally, your interest in an issue will depend on who is being interviewed, but there have been 40 issues of *Comics Interview* and no totally dull ones — not even the *G.I. Joe* issue. Grade: A.

Four titles.

Four As. Four for four. Way to go, Dave.

— Don Thompson
COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE

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A
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WONDER
WOMAN, DID
YOU SCAN
THIS
COMIC?



NO, SILLY,
THIS IS A
KCBURBS
SCAN, FOR
DCP!!